

November 27, 1978

Ms. Kathleen K. Schmitz
Mr. Karl F. Johnson
School of Administration
Division of Public Administration
University of Missouri - Kansas City
Kansas City, Missouri 64110

Dear Ms. Schmitz and Mr. Johnson:

I am sorry that it has taken so long for me to respond to your letter but I was away from the laboratory for the first several weeks of November. My responses to your questionnaire are contained in this letter because, for the most part, I decline to answer the questions. Inherent in the questions themselves are assumptions with which I do not agree.

First of all, I believe that predicting the time for accomplishment of particular scientific matters is a foolish exercise doomed to failure and therefore a waste of time. It is of course the unknown findings of future research that will determine when the matters you mention are accomplished and we do not have crystal balls. For the same reason, while I believe that discussion of such matters is important, the development of policy is certainly premature.

I also decline to list the items in order of priority. Because of our inability to predict, we are stuck with simply letting things happen. Scientists generally investigate those problems that are tractable at any given time. Therefore I believe in allocation of resources to broad areas (such as genetics itself) with scientists deciding which experiments to do first.

I do believe that the Federal governments needs to establish guidelines for the safe conduct of recombinant DNA experiments. However, since genetic experiments using human cells (I assume in tissue culture) present no particular hazard I do not believe that they need to be regulated aside from the guidelines for recombinant DNA work.

I hope that this will be helpful to you in your effort to formulate policy alternatives in the area of human genetic medicine.

Sincerely yours,

Maxine Singer, Ph.D.
Head, Nucleic Acid Enzymology Section
Laboratory of Biochemistry